DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 161 SO 033 055

AUTHOR Hahn, Carole L.
TITLE Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, and Experiences of Ninth Graders in the United States: Results from the IEA Civic Education Study. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-SO-2001-8
PUB DATE 2001-10-00
NOTE 4p.
CONTRACT ED-99-CO-0016
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698. Tel: 800-266-3815 (Toll Free); Fax: 812-855-0455; e-mail: ericso@indiana.edu. For full text: http://ericso.indiana.edu.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship Education; Civics; *Democracy; *Democratic Values; Grade 9; High Schools; *Political Attitudes; Social Studies; *Student Attitudes; Student Evaluation; Student Surveys
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; *International Assn Evaluation Educ Achievement

ABSTRACT

What do ninth grade students in the United States know about democracy and democratic principles? What attitudes do they have toward civic issues? What experiences have they had in democratic participation and how engaged do they expect to be in the political arena as adults? How do youth in the United States compare with their peers in other nations on indicators of civic knowledge and engagement? Those questions and others were addressed in the recent Civic Education (CivEd) study conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). This digest reports the main findings of the United States portion of the IEA CivEd study. (BB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education

DIGEST

http://ericso.indiana.edu

2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120 Indiana University Bloomington, Indiana 47408 812-855-3838 • 800-266-3815

EDO-SO-2001-8 October 2001

Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, and Experiences of Ninth Graders in the United States: Results from the IEA Civic Education Study

By Carole L. Hahn

ED 458 161

SO 033 055

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education

DIGEST http://ericso.indiana.edu

2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120 Indiana University Bloomington, Indiana 47408 812-855-3838 • 800-266-3815

EDO-SO-2001-8 October 2001

Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, and Experiences of Ninth Graders in the United States: Results from the IEA Civic Education Study

By Carole L. Hahn

What do ninth graders in the United States know about democracy and democratic principles? What attitudes do they have toward civic issues? What experiences have they had in democratic participation and how engaged do they expect to be in the political arena as adults? How do youth in the United States compare with their peers in other nations on indicators of civic knowledge and engagement? Those questions and others were addressed in the recent Civic Education (CivEd) study conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). This Digest discusses the main findings of the United States portion of the IEA CivEd study.

The IEA Civic Education Study. Twenty-eight countries participated in the large-scale international study, which was carried out in two phases. In Phase 1, researchers developed case studies of civic education in their particular countries (Torney-Purta and Others 1999). The United States case study drew upon a variety of data sources (Hahn 1999). The researchers conducted a literature survey and a textbook analysis. Additionally, they surveyed the 50 states, conducted focus groups with teachers and students, and interviewed experts in civic education. In addition to contributing to the case studies, information from Phase 1 provided the basis for developing instruments in Phase 2 of the study.

Phase 2 tested nationally representative samples of 14-year-old students on their civic knowledge (including both content and skills), concepts, attitudes, and experiences. The sample for Phase 2 in the United States consisted of 2,811 ninth graders from 124 nationally representative public and private schools (Baldi and Others 2001). Questionnaires were administered to American students in October 1999. At the same time, an administrator in each of the selected schools completed a school questionnaire.

Knowledge. The mean score of U.S. students on the knowledge test was significantly above the international mean (Baldi and Others 2001; Torney-Purta and Others 2001). Additionally, the two subscales of the knowledge test—content and skills—were examined separately. American students performed at the international mean on the content scale and significantly better than students in all other countries tested on the civic skills scale. Skills include the abilities to distinguish fact from opinion, interpret political cartoons, and comprehend political messages.

In Phase 2, 70 percent of school administrators reported that their school required a social studies course in the ninth grade, but 30 percent did not (Baldi and Others 2001). Moreover, only 55 percent reported that they required of ninth graders five to six periods of a civics-related subject such as civics, history, or social studies. Sixty-five percent of students reported that they studied social studies in school almost daily (presumably, in addition to taking required courses, some students were enrolled in electives). Importantly, students who reported studying social studies in school almost every day scored higher on all three achievement scales (content and skills, as well as overall knowledge) than students who studied social studies twice a week or less (Baldi and Others 2001).

Other factors associated with students' performance on the knowledge aspect of the IEA CivEd test included socioeconomic variables, race/ethnicity, and participation in extracurricular activities. Students who performed well on the civic knowledge test attended schools with a small percentage of students who were eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, had parents who had completed comparatively more years of school, and had many home resources, such as books and a daily newspaper (Baldi and Others 2001). On the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) researchers also found that socioeconomic factors were associated with civic achievement (Lutkus and Others 1999).

In the IEA CivEd study no gender differences were found for U.S. students on the knowledge test as a whole or on the items measuring knowledge of civic content (Baldi and Others 2001); however, females significantly outperformed males on the measure of civic skills. With respect to race/ethnicity, white students scored higher than African American and Hispanic students on overall knowledge and on both subscales. Students born in the United States had higher civic knowledge scores than students born outside the United States (Baldi and Others 2001). Similarly, NAEP Civics reported no gender differences in civic knowledge and whites outperformed African American and Hispanic students (Lutkus and Others 1999).

Many ninth graders who participated in extracurricular activities earned higher civic knowledge scores than students who did not (Baldi and Others 2001). Moreover, not only students who participated in student government, but also those who participated in sports, arts programs, community volunteer work, and religious organizations did better than students who did not participate in those activities. It is noteworthy that the percentage of ninth-graders who reported that they participated in voluntary activities to help the community—50—was identical to the percentage reported in the NAEP Civics (Lutkus and Others 1999). Moreover, it was higher than the percentage reported by students in any of the other 27 countries participating in the CivEd study (Torney-Purta and Others 2001).

Attitudes. The IEA CivEd study assessed students' attitudes toward a number of civic issues. Nine out of ten U.S. students supported women's political rights and agreed that women should run for office and have the same rights as men (Baldi and Others

Carole L. Hahn is Professor of Educational Studies at Emory University, Atlanta. She was the National Research Coordinator for the United States portion of the IEA study reported here.

2001). This was substantially more supportive than U.S. students had been in the previous IEA civic education study (Torney and Others 1975). In the recent assessment, U.S. students along with students from only three other countries (Norway, Sweden, and Cyprus) were above the international mean both in support of rights for women and of immigrants (Torney-Purta and Others 2001). Among the American students, students born outside the country were more supportive of immigrants' rights than those born in the United States (Baldi and Others 2001). Additionally, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial ninth graders reported more positive attitudes toward immigrants' rights than did white students. Female students tended to be more supportive of both women's rights and immigrants' rights than male students. There were no differences among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds on the immigrants' rights scale. Students from higher socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds, however, were more supportive of women's rights than those from lower SES backgrounds. Additionally, ninth graders were assessed for their attitudes toward a number of government institutions, toward their country and its symbols, and toward international relations.

Experiences. Ninth grade students reported participating in a variety of civic-related activities, and they expected future participation as adults. Close to 60 percent of students said that they discuss national government and politics with teachers and adult family members (Baldi and Others 2001). Fewer reported discussing international politics; 52 percent said they have such discussions with teachers and 43 percent said they have them with adult family members. Only 18 percent reported they discuss international politics with people their own age; 30 percent reported discussing national politics with peers.

Almost 80 percent of the United States ninth graders reported that they obtain news from television (Baldi and Others 2001). Fewer reported reading newspapers to obtain national news (62 percent). These percentages are lower than those reported by students in most other countries (Torney-Purta and Others 2001).

One third of United States ninth graders reported that they participated in a student council or student government and 20 percent said that they worked on a school newspaper, two forms of school-level civic participation. As noted previously, half of the students said that they had participated in a group conducting voluntary activities in the community. Further, 40 percent said that they had participated in a charity that collected money for a social cause.

Ninth graders in the United States expect to be actively engaged adult citizens. Eighty-five percent said they expect to vote in national elections (Torney-Purta and Others 2001). Almost 30 percent said that they probably or certainly would write letters to a newspaper about social or political issues. Eighteen percent expected to be a candidate for a local political office (Baldi and Others 2001).

Conclusion. The IEA study reveals that in civic education, American students are doing well when compared to their peers in other countries. For the most part, ninth-grade students in the United States are becoming knowledgeable, caring, and engaged citizens of a democracy.

The picture, however, is not equally positive for all students. Students from low-income families and communities and African-American and Hispanic students do not do as well on civic knowledge tests as their more affluent and white peers, a finding that is consistent with much other research in the United States. (Lutkus and Others 1999, 50-53).

Copies of *What Democracy Means to Ninth-Graders: U.S. Results From the International IEA Civic Education Study* can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Education, ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398; toll-free 1-887-4ED-Pubs. The report is also available on the World Wide Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys>.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

Baldi, Stephane, and Others. WHAT DEMOCRACY MEANS TO NINTH-GRADERS: U.S. RESULTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIC EDUCATION STUDY. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2001. ED 454 152.

Hahn, Carole L. "Challenges to Civic Education in the United States." In Judith Torney-Purta, and Others eds., CIVIC EDUCATION ACROSS COUNTRIES: TWENTY-FOUR NATIONAL CASE STUDIES FROM THE IEA CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT. Amsterdam: The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 1999, 583-607. ED 431 705.

Lutkus, Anthony D., and Others. NAEP 1998 CIVICS REPORT CARD FOR THE NATION. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999. ED 435 583.

Niemi, Richard, and Christopher Chapman. "The Civic Development of 9th- through 12th- Grade Students in the United States: 1996." EDUCATION STATISTICS QUARTERLY 1 (Spring 1999): 39-41. EJ 584 972.

Torney, Judith, and Others. CIVIC EDUCATION IN TEN COUNTRIES. New York: John Wiley, 1975. ED 132 059.

Torney-Purta, Judith, and Others, Eds., CIVIC EDUCATION ACROSS COUNTRIES: TWENTY-FOUR NATIONAL CASE STUDIES FROM THE IEA CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT. Amsterdam: The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 1999. ED 431 705.

Torney-Purta, Judith, and Others. CITIZENSHIP AND EDUCATION IN TWENTY-EIGHT COUNTRIES: CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT AT AGE FOURTEEN. Amsterdam: The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2001. ED 452 116.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0016. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade name, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE